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Teen Fathers Get a Helping Hand in Butte County

While most young men in Butte County are studying for tests, attending high school basketball games and looking forward to spring break, some young fathers are learning valuable skills that will help give their children the best start in life. The Butte County Children and Families Commission (BCCFC) and Northern Valley Catholic Social Service of Butte County are working together to provide free support groups for young fathers.

Funded by a grant from BCCFC, the Young Fathers Group provides workshops on parenting skills for dads 25 and under, including parent-child bonding tips, how to care for a new baby and stress management and reduction techniques. The teen fathers also meet with other veteran dads who serve as mentors by providing encouragement and sharing their personal experiences and insights.

“The Fathers Group helps prepare young dads for the demands of fatherhood,” said Karen Marlatt, Commission Chair of BCCFC. “They come to understand how important their role is as their child’s first teacher and learn how to adjust their lives to best take care of their child.”

To help young dads better handle the new pressures of parenthood, the Young Fathers Group is a

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fun and supportive atmosphere where dads share their challenges and successes with each other.

The more popular group outings include basketball, football and driving ranges. The young fathers also take their families to places such as Chuck E. Cheese, FunLand and Kid's Kingdom.

"It's tough being a teenager and a dad. The support group helps me to better deal with all the new responsibilities that come with being a father," said Jesse Johnson, a teen father with an 11-month-old boy from Chico.

In addition to the support group, Northern Valley Catholic Social Service of Butte County uses BCCFC grant funds to provide free counseling and in-home parenting services for expectant parents or young parenting with children ages 0 to 5.

For young fathers interested in joining the Young Fathers Group or young parents who would like to learn more about the available services through Northern Valley Catholic Social Service of Butte County, please call 800-339-8336 for more information.

About Butte County Children and Families Commission

Research shows that a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child's growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. Based on this research, California voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to support programs for expectant parents and children ages 0 to 5. Butte County Children and Families Commission distributes approximately \$2 million a year in Prop. 10 revenues to programs and services that meet local needs.

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